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Three Generations of Kentucky Lincolns

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[redacted]

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Three Generations of Kentucky Lincolns

By Louis A. Warren
Director, Lincoln National Life Foundation, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Read before The Filson Club, December 6, 1937

There remains today no male descendant of President Lincoln bearing the Lincoln name, although there courses through the veins of individuals in many cognate families the blood of men with a noble Lincoln heritage. Three generations of the Lincolns lived in Kentucky, over a period of thirty-four years, during the latter part of the Eighteenth Century and the beginning of the Nineteenth Century.

Representatives of the first generation lie buried in Kentucky soil. Most of the individuals comprising the second generation were united in marriage to sons and daughters of Kentucky pioneers and the records of their nuptial vows are preserved in Kentucky archives. Included in the third generation of Lincolns are those born in Old Kentucky, and most illustrious of them all, Abraham Lincoln, "the man for the ages."

Is it strange that there should be an ever-increasing interest in this character whom Woodrow Wilson called "the supreme American of our history"? Is it worth while for historically-minded people to take seriously the systematic gathering of facts about a character whom H. G. Wells, the English historian, has placed among the six outstanding world figures who have lived since the beginning of time?

Commenting on this last question, it might be said that the record of Lincoln's administration as President is conserved in the government archives. The history of Lincoln's prairie years is being minutely tabulated by the Abraham Lincoln Association of Illinois in conjunction with the Illinois State Library. The fourteen years which Abraham Lincoln spent in Indiana is being recreated in the library of the Lincoln National Life Foundation

at Fort Wayne, Indiana. If the Kentucky years of Lincoln and his forbears are to receive their proper emphasis, comparable to the other periods of his life, it must be done by a reputable, unbiased, and efficient organization located in the immediate field of research.

If there is one project of far-reaching importance which would seem to come directly within the scope of The Filson Club's activities, it is the building up and perpetuating of a documentary background for Abraham Lincoln's ancestry, parentage, and childhood as represented by the "Three Generations of Kentucky Lincolns." This task would not be an easy one, however, as the first effort devolving upon the sponsors of such an enterprise would be to clear away the accumulated mass of folklore and tradition which has almost obscured the cabin homes of the Lincolns, and made the so-called putative father of the President a worthless vagabond.

The emphasis which has been placed upon wholly unreliable gossip about the ancestry, the origin, and the early home surroundings of Abraham Lincoln has given countless thousands of readers the world over a distorted picture of pioneer life in Kentucky. It is only through sincere interest in the story of this remarkable character that great numbers of readers have had occasion to visualize pioneer Kentucky. If one may not be especially interested in the life of Lincoln himself, thinking of him as a mere vehicle of information, state pride alone should be sufficient to enlist the cooperation of all Kentuckians in creating a Lincoln literature that correctly interprets the Lincoln family's Kentucky environment.

The purpose of this paper is to focus the light of documentary evidence upon the usual answers given to three specific questions which confront every sincere investigator who has desired to know the truth about the Kentucky Lincolns. It is fortunate, indeed, as far as the continuity of this argument is concerned, that the first question relates to the earliest generation of Kentucky Lincolns; the next question is mainly concerned with the second generation, and the third question refers to the last generation; hence, our interest in "Three Generations of Kentucky Lincolns."

The first important query propounded by the serious and open-minded student, who seeks to know the facts about the Abraham Lincoln background, refers to the social and cultural

status of Abraham Lincoln's forbears. An excerpt from Woodrow Wilson's book, *Division and Union*, supplies a statement which could be considered typical of the opinion generally held even to this day in Kentucky. Wilson stated that: "Abraham Lincoln came from the most unpromising stock on the continent, 'the poor white trash of the South.' "[1] Another university man, contemporary with Wilson, holding a professorship on the Western coast, declared that: "At the time of Thomas Lincoln's birth, twenty-eight years before, his parents—drifting, roaming people, struggling with poverty—were dwellers in the Virginia Mountains."[2] Were Abraham Lincoln's ancestors poor white trash? might be our first question. Duly authorized records relating to the first generation of Kentucky Lincolns will serve as a sufficient exhibit to clarify the social and cultural status of Abraham Lincoln's forbears.

In Colonial days there lived in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia a prosperous farmer named John Lincoln. His family consisted of his wife, five sons, and four daughters. His first three boys were named Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the two remaining sons, John and Thomas. Jacob, a Revolutionary soldier, was the only one of the five boys to remain in the beautiful Shenandoah Valley and the portentous Colonial dwelling which he erected on the Lincoln plantation is still standing as visible evidence of the social position enjoyed by the Lincolns in Virginia. In fact, this Lincoln home, which stands but a few miles north of Woodrow Wilson's own birthplace, in the same valley and in a community once a part of the same county, is not inferior to the home which witnessed the nativity of the World War President.

Isaac Lincoln, who was appointed as constable in Augusta County when twenty-three years of age, migrated to Tennessee and became a wealthy and influential landowner. John, a deputy surveyor of Rockingham County, moved to Ohio. He was a very devout man and his library contained many valuable religious works as revealed by his will. The two remaining sons, Thomas and Abraham, moved to Kentucky.

Thomas Lincoln settled at a point five miles from Lexington, in one of the finest farming districts in the Blue-Grass. He immediately began to prosper and as early as 1801 had acquired six slaves. On his 290-acre farm, for which he had paid four

[1] Woodrow Wilson: *Division and Union*, page 216.
[2] Nathaniel Stephenson: *Lincoln*, page 4.

hundred pounds, he built a stone still house, which stands to this day as a monument to his prosperity, but also as a monument to his downfall, as well. The story of his imbibing too freely of the product of his still brought on matrimonial difficulties and eventually failure, although as late as 1814 he listed for taxation a wheel-carriage, which, even at that time, was a vehicle of distinction in the city of Lexington.[3]

Abraham Lincoln, the grandfather of President Lincoln, established his home in Kentucky about the year 1782. It must have been more than a coincidence that these two last named Lincoln brothers chose their home sites not far from what were to become the State's outstanding cities, Louisville and Lexington. Although Abraham Lincoln, the pioneer, was but thirty-six years old when he first visited Kentucky, he had become a prominent man in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. At twenty-six years of age he was captain in the Virginia Militia. During the Revolutionary War he served as judge advocate in the military courts of Augusta and Rockingham counties.[4]

Among the five Lincoln brothers, it cannot be said that there was a single one of them who was not able, in early life, to move in the best social circles in his immediate community and no one of them which could by any means have been confused with "the poor white trash of the South." It is not the purpose of this paper to discuss ancestral contributions made to the Lincolns, back further than the generation which migrated to Kentucky in 1782, although it could be done with some advantage to the cultural status of the family.

Coming to a more detailed study of Abraham Lincoln's own grandfather, we become interested primarily in a survey of conditions existing in Jefferson County prior to 1786, and especially with reference to the type of people who settled the eastern part of this county at a point where the lines of Oldham, Shelby, and Jefferson converge, where he is supposed to have made his first permanent home.

On March 4, 1780, Abraham Lincoln, the pioneer, was granted a warrant for 400 acres of land in the Kentucky country. This certificate was used to enter a survey on Long Run at Hughes Station on May 29 of the same year.[5] By 1782 the pioneer had

[3] Commissioner's Tax Book, Fayette County, Kentucky, 1801, 1814.

[4] Order Book XVI, Augusta County, Virginia, Court, page 222.

[5] Land Book, A, Jefferson County, Kentucky, Court, page 107. A detailed description of the Morgan Hughes Station, with pictures, is given in "The Filson Club in the 1937 Lincoln Pilgrimage—A Reprint of the Club's Brochure on the Lincolns in Jefferson County, Kentucky," published in *The Filson Club History Quarterly*, Vol. XI, No. 3, July, 1937, pages 189-210.

moved his family to Kentucky and probably assisted in the establishment of Hughes Station. By 1786 the pioneer Lincoln's land holdings in various parts of Kentucky had increased to over 5,000 acres—a fairly good estate for poor white trash struggling with poverty.

A disaster occurred in the family circle in 1786, which caused the economic collapse of the family. The pioneer Lincoln, although then but forty-two years of age, was massacred by the Indians and left his widow with five orphan children to rear. President Lincoln stated in his autobiographical sketch, written in 1860, that the story of his grandfather's death was the "legend more strongly than all others imprinted upon my mind and memory."[6] As far as we can learn, the first fragment of history recorded about the Lincolns by one outside the family circle came from Major Bland W. Ballard.

Major Ballard, who was familiar with Hughes Station, stated some time before his death in 1853 that "In 1786, a man was killed here by an Indian while he was coming to the station from his land near by on Long Run where he had been putting in a crop. His family resided in the station and soon moved into Washington county."[7] It is apparent that Colonel Durrett at one time was inclined to think this was the pioneer Lincoln's family, but, inasmuch as the President stated the massacre occurred about 1784, Durrett apparently withdrew his supposition. We now know that the massacre did occur in 1786, and that some time after this the widow Lincoln and her children did move to that portion of Nelson County which later became Washington.

There can be no confusion about the economic standing of the pioneer Lincoln which allowed him to associate with the leading citizens of the Kentucky country in 1786. Both the pioneer and his wife could write and all their children were taught the art of writing. There must have been a degree of culture in a home where the mother, Bathsheba, as well, is said to have come from an influential and respected family of the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia.

In the light of duly authorized records now available, it does not appear as if there would be any dispute over where the pioneer Lincoln was living at the time of his massacre. The land entry

[6] Autobiography prepared by Lincoln for John Locke Scripps.
[7] Durrett Collection, Chicago University, box marked Forts.

proves his ownership of the 400-acre Hughes Station plot. The presence of pioneer Abraham Lincoln, himself, on the same 400-acre tract in Jefferson County, accompanied by his son, Josiah, is confirmed by the survey made in 1785. The widow Lincoln signed her name to a subscription circulated in the Hughes Station community shortly after her husband's death in 1786. Folklore current before the name Lincoln became significant is in harmony with the records.

Taking into consideration the family history of the Lincolns in Virginia, the economic condition of the pioneer Lincolns in Kentucky, and the apparent culture which is evident from their more than usual attainments, it does seem as if the Lincolns should be given their proper place among the aggressive pioneers who settled Kentucky. Most certainly and most emphatically, they were not poor white trash at any stage of their migratory efforts.[8]

The second question usually asked about the Kentucky Lincolns relates to President Lincoln's paternity. It is presented here in the usual bold form in which the inquiry is made: Was Abraham Lincoln an illegitimate child? This query which involves his parentage causes us to make some inquiries with reference to the second generation of Kentucky Lincolns.

It is not the purpose of this paper to review all of the disgusting and groundless stories which are still in circulation throughout Kentucky and elsewhere with reference to Lincoln's paternity. It is to be regretted, however, that they have been and are still being perpetuated by men and women whose influence and position contribute to the general acceptance of the theory that Lincoln was a baseborn child.

Forty-two years ago, Lucinda Boyd, who was then writing a history of Winchester and Clark county, Kentucky, made an affidavit which is printed in a book she wrote called *The Sorrows of Nancy*. In this affidavit she repeats the story of Lincoln's origin as told to her by her father, the Reverend Samuel Rogers, a minister of the Disciple Church in Kentucky and other states for more than sixty years. She affirms:

"Nancy, Lincoln's mother was the child of Lucy Hanks, Hornback, or Sparrow and a son of Judge John Marshall of

[8] For a full biographical discussion of the Pioneer Abraham Lincoln, see "Abraham Lincoln, Senior, Grandfather of the President" [by Louis A. Warren], a paper read before The Filson Club and published in *The Filson Club History Quarterly*, Vol. V, No. 3, July, 1931.

Virginia . . . Lincoln's father was the adopted son of the same Judge Marshall of Virginia mentioned above."[9]

When Mrs. Boyd, the affiant, visited Washington, D. C., for the first time, about ten years before the aforesaid affidavit was made, she said, "I came in sight of the statue of Chief-Justice John Marshall, seated. There I thought is the finest likeness of President Lincoln I have ever seen."[10]

After the Marshall ghost, as it relates to the Lincoln family, had rested in comparative obscurity for thirty years or more, it was left for Albert J. Beveridge, famous biographer of the Chief Justice, to again secretly bring it forth and show it to his friends. The writer of this paper, while a dinner guest one evening in the Senator's home, shortly before his death, was informed that the spark of genius that set Lincoln apart from other men came from John Marshall.

Here is a brief excerpt from a letter written to me by a prominent Indiana business man on October 26, 1927:

"Only last week, an intimate friend of Albert J. Beveridge told me that he spent an evening with Beveridge a few weeks before his death and that Beveridge told him that he had come to the conclusion that Abraham Lincoln was the illegitimate son of Nancy Hanks by Thomas Marshall [probably meant John Marshall] and that he was trying to come to a definite and satisfactory conclusion in his own mind, whether or not to come boldly out and say so in his *Life of Lincoln*."[11]

The interest which Beveridge took in the Marshall stories illustrates that the charge of Lincoln's illegitimacy is not in every instance a bit of gossip but an apparently sincere effort on the part of some historians to discover the source of Lincoln's genius.

A prominent Kentucky judge who practiced at the bar over a period of sixty years made an affidavit in 1898, when he was then ninety years of age, that "In all that time I have never heard among my legal friends—and I know nearly all the lawyers, old and young in the state—the fact of Abraham Lincoln's illegitimacy disputed."[12]

On January 11, 1935, the president of a Southern university wrote about the paternity of Abraham Lincoln. Here is an

[9] Lucinda Boyd: *The Sorrows of Nancy*, page 77.
[10] Lucinda Boyd: *The Sorrows of Nancy*, page 6.
[11] Correspondence files, Lincoln National Life Foundation, Fort Wayne, Indiana.
[12] Lucinda Boyd: *The Sorrows of Nancy*, page 82.

extract from his letter which records the reminiscences of the father of an aged man, who belonged to the same Masonic Lodge at Vicksburg, Mississippi, with which Jefferson Davis' father was affiliated. This is the story that the father of Jefferson Davis is said to have told two of his Masonic brothers:

"Nancy Hanks served in his home in Kentucky when the child Jefferson Davis was expectant in 1808. He said that when he discovered that Nancy Hanks was to become a mother through his conduct, he paid her a handsome sum, as money went in those days, to induce some man to marry her and take care of the child. He confided to them that Jefferson Davis and Abraham Lincoln were half brothers, Jefferson Davis being born June 3, 1808, and Abraham Lincoln, February 12, 1809."[13]

One of the most famous Presbyterian clergymen in America wrote within the past year about this same Davis-Lincoln story, but in his version of the matter the girl named Nancy Hanks was a mulatto. There are at least a dozen other stories about Lincoln's paternity in general circulation, involving men in some of the best known families in Kentucky and the South. Why this whispered history of Lincoln's parentage is allowed to surplant records that speak with authority is of deep concern to all documentary historians. It will be observed that before very much constructive work can be done in presenting a historical treatise on the second generation of Kentucky Lincolns, a lot of rubbish must be cleared away.

If Thomas Lincoln was not the father of Abraham Lincoln, there would be little incentive to gather information about the first generation of Kentucky Lincolns, and the history of Thomas, himself, would be much less important; also, the four state flags displayed in the Lincoln tomb at Springfield, representing the states where Abraham's forbears lived, would be pure mockery. The high authorities, and the great number of common people, who still look with favor upon at least one of the stories of Lincoln's illegitimacy, hold to these traditions in spite of the conclusions to the contrary which may now be drawn from duly authorized public records.

The marriage papers of Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks are to be seen in the Washington County, Kentucky, courthouse. They are duly signed and recorded and no one can deny that the parents of Abraham were legally married on June 12, 1806, three

[13] Correspondence Files, Lincoln National Life Foundation, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

years before Abraham Lincoln was born. These records should at once invalidate all those stories which reflect upon the character of Nancy Hanks as an unmarried mother.

Vital statistics were not gathered systematically as early as the year of Abraham Lincoln's birth, but the old family Bibles often supplied the information which was later collected by the State. The Lincoln family Bible is the second exhibit of importance which supplements the marriage papers. It gives the names of three children born to Thomas and Nancy Lincoln with their birth dates: the first, a daughter, Sarah; the second Abraham; and the third, Thomas. Most of the stories which have suggested an irregular paternity for Abraham have made him the first-born child of his mother and have been unwilling to recognize the presence of a little sister, two years old, in the Lincoln home at the time of Abraham's birth.

A third series of exhibits allows one to conclude without any reasonable doubt the place where Nancy Hanks Lincoln was residing with her husband after they were married. The Kentucky tax list for 1806 shows Thomas Lincoln to have been a resident of Hardin County. In 1807 Thomas Lincoln was entered as a tithable and was taxed for one lot in Elizabethtown, Kentucky. The following year, 1808, he was taxed for two lots in the same town.[14] An account book kept by Bleakly and Montgomery at Elizabethtown, reveals that on May 16, 1806, four days after his marriage to Nancy Hanks in Washington County, Thomas and his bride had returned to Hardin County, as on that day Thomas purchased some merchandise at their store.[15]

Not only the Bleakly and Montgomery store book, but the county records as well, prove that Thomas Lincoln and his wife were residing in Elizabethtown, Hardin County, from the time of their marriage until three months before the birth of Abraham. The President himself, in correspondence with a citizen of Elizabethtown, said that he was not born there but his sister, two years older than he, was. Those who have located Lincoln's

[14] Commissioners' Tax Books, Hardin County, Kentucky State Historical Society, Frankfort.

[15] Photostat copies of original entry in Lincoln National Life Foundation, Fort Wayne, Indiana; also in archives of The Filson Club. Bleakly is sometimes spelled Bleakley, and Blakely. See also "Thomas Lincoln's Account with Elizabethtown Merchants," by Otis M. Mather, in *The Register* of the Kentucky State Historical Society, January, 1930, and "Thomas Lincoln's Wedding Outfit," by Mather, in *The Register*, October, 1931.

mother in any home other than the one in Elizabethtown, Kentucky, desiring to support some alleged paternity, certainly have been in error as to her residence.

There is one more exhibit which the records supply with reference to the paternity of Abraham Lincoln and it refers directly to the month in which he was conceived. No one has seriously questioned the date of Abraham Lincoln's birth as having been on February 12, 1809. This would place the time of his conception in the month of May, 1808. We have already shown by tax returns that the Lincolns were living in Elizabethtown, Kentucky, at this time. On May 9, 1808, Thomas Lincoln was present in the courthouse at Elizabethtown, where he had a law case being tried against Denton Geoghegan, for the collection of wages due.[16] On May 13 two dozen buttons were charged to the Thomas Lincoln account in Bleakly and Montgomery store. On May 16 and May 30 other records refer to the Geoghegan suit, which indicates Thomas Lincoln's presence in Elizabethtown during the month of May.

The illegitimacy of Abraham Lincoln can only be confirmed by admitting that in the Elizabethtown cabin, where a husband and wife were evidently living happily together with a baby girl, sixteen months old, to bless their union, some intruder desecrated the sanctity of this home. So far as the many traditions referring to the illegitimacy of Abraham Lincoln are concerned, no one of them has suggested that Nancy Hanks was a wife and mother when visited by one of the alleged paternal aspirants.

To summarize the finding of these exhibits, it is foolish to question the marriage of Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks with the marriage papers available. To make Abraham Lincoln the first-born child of his parents is to deny the entries in the family Bible. To suggest any other place of residence for Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks from the time of their marriage up to three months before Abraham Lincoln's birth, is to discount the state, county, and town documents. It would appear from the available records that the second generation of Kentucky Lincolns have a very definite place in the study of Abraham Lincoln, because it produced his parents, Thomas and Nancy Hanks Lincoln.

By the use of duly authorized public records as an authentic source of information, it has been shown that the first generation

[16] Miscellaneous bundle, Geoghegan *versus* Lincoln, Hardin County, Kentucky, Circuit Court.

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of Kentucky Lincolns were by no means to be confused with a class of people known as the "poor white trash." By the same type of documentary evidence we have discovered that there are no grounds for suspecting any irregularities in the paternity of Abraham Lincoln and that his father was Thomas Lincoln, notwithstanding many stories to the contrary, and that the parents were in every respect worthy members of the second generation of Kentucky Lincolns.

There is one more question which is often asked by the student of history who seeks to secure some dependable information about the Lincolns, and it refers directly to Abraham Lincoln, the President, a member of the third generation of Kentucky Lincolns. Some of the statements made by outstanding Lincoln authors upon the economic standing of the family may suggest the importance of raising this third specific question about the Kentucky Lincolns.

Nicolay and Hay, Lincoln's own private secretaries and afterwards his best known biographers, voiced this sentiment in their famous ten-volume history of the President.

"In the midst of the most unpromising circumstances that ever witnessed the advent of a hero into this world, Abraham Lincoln was born."[17]

Some other excerpts which contribute to this dismal picture follow:

"The boy spent the most susceptible years of his life under no discipline, but that of degrading poverty."[18]

"Lincoln was born in a degradation very far below respectable poverty in the state of Kentucky and lived in that poverty all his life."[19]

"Reared in gripping, grinding, pinching penury and pallid poverty, amid the most squalid destitution possible to conceive."[20]

"In childhood and youth his place of abode, a squalid camp in a howling wilderness, his meal an ashen crust, his bed a pile of leaves, his nominal guardian a shiftless and worthless vagabond."[21]

"Rough, coarse, low, ignorant and poverty stricken surroundings were about the child."[22]

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[17] Nicolay and Hay: *Abraham Lincoln—A History*, Vol. 1, page 5.
[18] Woodrow Wilson: *Division and Union*, page 216.
[19] Eugene W. Chafin: *Lincoln: The Man of Sorrow*, page 10.
[20] Madison C. Peters: *Abraham Lincoln's Religion*, page 3.
[21] James H. Cathey: *Truth Is Stranger Than Fiction*, page 193.
[22] John T. Morse, Jr.: *Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. 1, page 9.

"It is well nigh impossible to exaggerate the adverse conditions which surrounded him."[23]

It is William Herndon, the last law partner of Abraham Lincoln, however, who is largely responsible for the confusion which exists about the home environment of Lincoln in Kentucky. In the preface to his three-volume work he makes this statement, "Abraham Lincoln came from a stagnant, putrid pool." With these opinions before us it is not strange that we often hear this third specific question asked: Was Abraham Lincoln reared in a poverty-stricken, slovenly environment? In this instance also, it might be well to let the records speak before drawing our conclusions.

There are three different aspects of Abraham Lincoln's home life which seem to be vital in an attempt to answer the question about his early surroundings: the economic condition of the family, the degree of intelligence enjoyed by the parents and neighbors, and the moral code in the home.

When Thomas Lincoln was twenty-one years of age, he went to work for Samuel Haycraft, at Elizabethtown, who was constructing a mill. This was in 1797 and his wages entered on the Haycraft account book to Thomas Lincoln's credit amounted to $140.80.[24] The following year he evidently was with his Uncle Isaac and undoubtedly earned good wages there. Two years later he entered land in Cumberland County, and on September 2, 1803, he purchased a farm on Mill Creek, Hardin County, and paid 118 pounds cash in hand for it.[25] By this time he was working as a cabinet maker and on August 8, 1804, paid $4.38 for a saw. Many other items needed in his carpenter work were secured from Bleakly & Montgomery, storekeepers in Elizabethtown. On October 16 of the same year he received a credit of $14.69 for beef delivered to the merchants, which indicates he was operating his Hardin County farm on which he was living with his mother as well as attending to cabinet making.

On January 1, 1805, Thomas Lincoln must have resolved to "step out," as he purchased a new hat, paying $8.75 for it, and many other items were acquired later, including a pair of suspenders which cost him $2.19. In July, on one day, he put to his credit at the merchants $35.76. It was in 1806, the year of his marriage, that Thomas shows the largest balance in his store

[23] Frederick Trevor Hill: *Lincoln's Legacy of Inspiration*, page 3.
[24] Documentary files, Lincoln National Life Foundation, Fort Wayne, Indiana.
[25] Deed Book B, Hardin County, Kentucky, Court, page 225.

account, being credited with approximately $200.00. One day in May, the month before his marriage, he bought merchandise to the amount of $175.10, a large part of it for a wedding suit and a great coat.[26]

During the year 1807 he continued to deposit money with Bleakly & Montgomery. One day $97.63 was put to his credit. He had acquired a cabin and house lot, in Elizabethtown, and in 1807 purchased an additional house lot. Late in the following year, on December 12, 1808, he paid $200.00 cash in hand for the farm on which Abraham Lincoln was to be born the following February.[27] At the time of Abraham Lincoln's birth Thomas Lincoln was in possession of at least 500 acres of land. Possibly the Cumberland County land and the Elizabethtown property were still in his possession. This was a pretty good estate for a poverty-stricken man.

It is impossible in the limited space allotted to this paper to review in detail Thomas Lincoln's many business transactions which are recorded during the years in which Abraham Lincoln was growing up. In 1811 Thomas Lincoln acquired another farm, on Knob Creek. By this time his land holdings must have been close to 700 acres. In 1814 he sold his Mill Creek farm for one hundred pounds. He had also accumulated some live stock, one year listing five horses, including a stallion. Of 104 families on the 1814 commissioners' book for Hardin County, in the community record where his name appears, there were but six taxpayers who listed as much live stock as he did.[28]

There is plenty of evidence that proves Thomas Lincoln was a good carpenter, and it is safe to conclude that his cabin home was as good and probably much better than the average one in Kentucky in 1809. The quality of his workmanship as a cabinet maker is proven by pieces of his carpentry still preserved, and his cabin home must have been as well furnished as the average cabin of that day.[29] With such information as we have before us, the placing of Lincoln's parents during their Kentucky residence with a poverty-stricken class is certainly unjust.

With respect to the intelligence of his parents we can only rely upon certain signatures and statements of President Lin-

[26] Bleakly and Montgomery Account Book. Photostats of original entry in files of Lincoln National Life Foundation, Fort Wayne, Indiana. See footnote No. 15.
[27] Equity Bundle No. 24, Hardin County, Kentucky, Circuit Court.
[28] Deed Book E, Hardin County, Kentucky, Court, page 193.
[29] Corner Cupboard made by Thomas Lincoln on exhibition at J. B. Speed Memorial Museum, Louisville.

coln himself. We do have several fine signatures of Thomas Lincoln, and he was not illiterate in the sense that he could not write his name. Lincoln said his mother was a ready reader. Abraham Lincoln was sent to two terms of school by the time he was seven years of age. This indicates there was some intellectual atmosphere in a cabin home which would have caused the parents to send a child to a log cabin school at so young an age.

The moral condition of the home can be judged best by the fact that both Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln were members of the Little Mount Baptist Church, and, according to Lincoln himself, his mother read the Bible daily and his father offered grace at the table.[30]

There are many records in the archives of the Hardin County Court House which prove Thomas Lincoln was a respected and influential citizen of the community in which he lived. Many minor offices came to him. He was at no time delinquent in his taxes. There is no record extant, of which the writer is aware, which reflects upon his moral character or the behavior of his wife. If Abraham Lincoln came, as William Herndon suggests, from "a stagnant, putrid pool," the exact place where this pool was located cannot be discovered by referring to the public records.

Three specific questions have been presented in this discussion around which the argument has been developed: (1) Were Abraham Lincoln's ancestors "poor white trash"? (2) Was Abraham Lincoln an illegitimate child? (3) Was Abraham Lincoln reared in a poverty-stricken, slovenly environment?

Inasmuch as most Lincoln biographers have answered at least two of the questions in the affirmative and many of the most noted authorities on Lincoln have replied "yes" to all three of them, one can conclude for himself the opinion held by the public with reference to the three generations of Kentucky Lincolns.

It has been the purpose of this paper to appeal for a documentary approach to these three vital questions with the hope that the importance of creating an authentic source for the Kentucky history of the Lincolns may offer a challenge to The Filson Club which has participated in so many worth-while projects.

[30] For further evidence of the moral atmosphere of the Lincoln home, see "The Religious Background of the Lincoln Family" [by Louis A. Warren], a paper read before The Filson Club and published in *The Filson Club History Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 2, January, 1932.

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